<u>IN THE CLAIMS</u>:

Please cancel Claims 6, 7, 10, 16, 17, and 20 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

Please amend Claims 1-5, 8-9, 11-15, 18-19, and 21, and add new Claims 22-27 as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A ~~speech~~ synthesis <u>unit selection</u> apparatus comprising:

~~distortion output means for obtaining a distortion produced upon modifying a synthesis unit on the basis of predetermined prosody information; and~~

~~unit registration means for selecting a synthesis unit to be registered in a synthesis unit inventory used in speech synthesis on the basis of the distortion output from said distortion output means~~

<u>obtaining means for obtaining a string of synthesis units to one or more orders, which satisfies received strings, based upon a minimum distortion standard, wherein the string of synthesis units is obtained by concatenating stored synthesis units, and the minimum distortion standard determines an order of distortion values that are produced upon obtaining the string of synthesis units from the stored synthesis units; and</u>

<u>selection means for selecting a synthesis unit to be stored in a memory based on the string of synthesis units obtained by said obtaining means.</u>

2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~said distortion output means obtains the distortion on the basis of a~~ <u>at least one of a concatenation</u>

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distortion and <u>a modification distortion is produced, the</u> concatenation distortion <u>being</u> produced

upon concatenating ~~the~~ <u>a</u> synthesis unit to another synthesis unit, and ~~a~~ <u>the</u> modification

distortion <u>being</u> produced upon modifying ~~the~~ <u>a</u> synthesis unit.

3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, further

comprising:

text input means for inputting text ~~data;~~ <u>data,</u>

<u>wherein the received strings are included in the text data inputted by said text</u>

<u>input means</u>

~~language analysis means for performing language analysis of the input text~~

~~data; and~~

~~prosody generation means for generating the predetermined prosody~~

~~information on the basis of an analysis result of said language analysis means~~.

4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 2~~ <u>claim 1</u>, further

comprising:

~~Nbest determination means for obtaining Nbest sequences of a synthesis unit~~

~~sequence with reference to the distortion determined based on the concatenation and~~

~~modification distortions, and~~

~~wherein said unit~~ registration means ~~selects a~~ <u>for registering the</u> synthesis unit

<u>selected by said selection means</u> to ~~be registered in the~~ <u>a</u> synthesis unit inventory <u>in the memory</u>

~~on the basis of the Nbest sequences of the synthesis unit sequence~~.

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5. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said ~~unit registration~~ selections means selects a synthesis unit ~~to be registered in the synthesis unit inventory~~ on the basis of a weighted sum of the concatenation and modification distortions.

6-7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said ~~distortion output~~ obtaining means ~~has a table that stores~~ determines the modification <u>distortion</u> ~~distortion, and determines the modification distortion~~ by looking up ~~the~~ <u>a</u> table <u>that stores the modification distortion</u>.

9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said ~~distortion output~~ obtaining means ~~has a table that stores~~ determines the concatenation <u>distortion</u> ~~distortion, and determines the concatenation distortion~~ by looking up ~~the~~ <u>a</u> table <u>that stores the concatenation distortion</u>.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) A ~~speech~~ synthesis <u>unit selection</u> method comprising:

~~a distortion output step of obtaining a distortion produced upon modifying a synthesis unit on the basis of predetermined prosody information; and~~

~~a unit registration step of selecting a synthesis unit to be registered in a synthesis unit inventory used in speech synthesis on the basis of the distortion output from the distortion output step~~

an obtaining step of obtaining a string of synthesis units to one or more orders, which satisfies received strings, based upon a minimum distortion standard, wherein the string of synthesis units is obtained by concatenating stored synthesis units, and the minimum distortion standard determines an order of distortion values that are produced upon obtaining the string of synthesis units from the stored synthesis units; and

a selection step of selecting a synthesis unit to be stored in a memory based on the string of synthesis units obtained in said obtaining step.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein ~~in said distortion output step, the distortion is obtained on the basis of a~~ at least one of a concatenation distortion and a modification distortion is produced, the concatenation distortion being produced upon concatenating ~~the~~ a synthesis unit to another synthesis unit, and ~~a~~ the modification distortion being produced upon modifying ~~the~~ a synthesis unit.

13. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 11, further comprising the ~~steps~~ step of:

inputting text ~~data;~~ data,

~~performing language analysis of the input text data; and~~

~~generating the predetermined prosody information on the basis of an analysis~~ ~~result in the language analysis step~~

wherein the received strings are included in the text data inputted in said inputting step.

14. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~claim 12~~ claim 11, further comprising the step of:

~~obtaining Nbest sequences of a synthesis unit sequence with reference to the~~ ~~distortion determined based on the concatenation and modification distortions, and~~

~~wherein in said unit registration step,~~ registering ~~a~~ the synthesis unit ~~to be~~ ~~registered~~ selected in said selection step in ~~the~~ a synthesis unit inventory ~~is selected on the basis~~ ~~of the Nbest sequences of the synthesis unit sequence~~.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 12, wherein in said ~~unit registration~~ selection step, a synthesis unit ~~to be registered in the synthesis unit inventory~~ is selected on the basis of a weighted sum of the concatenation and modification distortions.

16-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 12, wherein in said ~~distortion output~~ obtaining step, the modification distortion is determined by looking up a table that stores the modification distortion.

19. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 2, wherein in said ~~distortion output~~ <u>obtaining</u> step, the concatenation distortion is determined by looking up a table that stores the concatenation distortion.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium storing a program that implements ~~a~~ <u>the</u> method ~~cited~~ <u>recited</u> in claim 11.

22. (New) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said selection means selects a synthesis unit that is most frequently used in a plurality of strings of synthesis units obtained by said obtaining means.

23. (New) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said selection means selects one or more synthesis units for a type of synthesis unit, in an order of frequencies of occurrence in a plurality of strings of synthesis units obtained by said obtaining means.

24. (New) The method according to claim 11, wherein in said selection step, a synthesis unit that is most frequently used in a plurality of strings of synthesis units obtained in said obtaining step is selected.

25. (New) The method according to claim 11, wherein in said selection step, one or more synthesis units for a type of synthesis unit is selected, in an order of frequencies of occurrence in a plurality of strings of synthesis units obtained in said obtaining step.

26. (New) A synthesis unit selection apparatus comprising:

an obtaining unit configured to obtain a string of synthesis units to one or more orders, which satisfies received strings, based upon a minimum distortion standard, wherein the string of synthesis units is obtained by concatenating stored synthesis units, and the minimum distortion standard determines an order of distortion values that are produced upon obtaining the string of synthesis units from the stored synthesis units; and

a selection unit configured to select a synthesis unit to be stored in a memory based on the string of synthesis units obtained by said obtaining unit.

27. (New) A program for implementing a synthesis unit selection method comprising:

an obtaining step module for obtaining a string of synthesis units to one or more orders, which satisfies received strings, based upon a minimum distortion standard, wherein the string of synthesis units is obtained by concatenating stored synthesis units, and the minimum distortion standard determines an order of distortion values that are produced upon obtaining the string of synthesis units from the stored synthesis units; and

a selection step module for selecting a synthesis unit to be stored in a memory based on the string of synthesis units obtained by said obtaining step module.